

Beach Grass Experiment for Duxbury

One or more areas of beach grass will be covered with sand, as part of an experiment planned for Duxbury Beach,

Duxbury Beach Reservation will undertake the project in collaboration with the Conservation Commission, the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, Mass. Audubon Society, and consultants who have been studying the beach since May.

Caring for the beach has become an increasingly complex task. Recognizing the need for more detailed information, the Reservation commissioned two studies to provide an objective basis for management decisions. They hired a traffic engineer to determine how many vehicles are coming over the bridge and exactly where they are going. That report has just been completed and will be available in the library following review by the Reservation.

The second study seeks to assess the geological and biological impacts of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic on the barrier beach. Three professors and their graduate students worked to collect data on all aspects of Duxbury Beach and to create a computer model based on aerial photographs and topography maps that the Reservation had made last year. They presented their report to the Conservation Commission on Feb. 1. The meeting was videotaped by Duxbury Community Television.

The consultants recommended trying to create more of the kind of unvegetated habitat shorebirds seem to prefer by covering some of the beach grass on the back beach with sand. It is expected that

the birds will benefit from the increase in potential nesting areas at the same time as the beach benefits from the addition of sand. If it doesn't work, the grass will grow back up through the sand in a year or two.

There are only five weeks to choose suitable areas, find compatible sand, and put it in place. Then the birds will begin to come back to Duxbury Beach and let us know whether or not the experiment is successful.

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